United Nations S/PV.7128

Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7128th meeting
Thursday, 6 March 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Asselborn	(Luxembourg)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Ms. King
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic pursuant to paragraph 48 of Security Council resolution 2127 (2013) (S/2014/142)

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14-25439 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic pursuant to paragraph 48 of Security Council resolution 2127 (2013) (S/2014/142)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Toussaint Kongo Doudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/142, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to introduce the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/142), which recommends the establishment of a United Nations multidimensional peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic. In accordance with the wishes expressed by the Security Council, the report was prepared in close collaboration with the African Union and I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere thanks to the African Union for its support and the valuable advice with which it provided us throughout the process. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the devotion and courageous efforts of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) and the French forces, which, in carrying out their respective mandates in difficult circumstances, have saved many lives.

As the report indicates, the situation on the ground has changed dramatically in recent months. The attacks of 5 December 2013 in Bangui and Bossangoa by the anti-Balaka against the Séléka forces, as well as the use of heavy weapons, have changed the dynamic of the conflict and led to a deterioration of the security situation and the triggering of a vicious cycle of retaliation among civilians and clashes between armed groups.

Although the situation in Bangui has somewhat stabilized to some extent thanks to the tireless efforts of MISCA, the Operation Sangaris and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, civilians continue to be killed every day by other civilans and armed groups, in particular owing to their religious affiliation. The Muslims peoples, as far as they are concerned, are forced to flee the targeted and deliberate violence against them. Unfortunately, all that will have long-term social consequences.

Ms. Amos and Mr. Guterres will present the chief results of their recent visit to the Central African Republic. They will describe in greater detail the unacceptable suffering of the Central Africans and the serious critical period of protection that the country is at present undergoing. For my part, I will focus on the recommendation of the Secretary-General with regard to the deployment of a peacekeeping operation, whose establishment will take approximately six months. However, there remain urgent needs that require a response today in order to put an end to the violence and massive human rights violations while the humanitarian assistance continues. The proposal that the Secretary-General presented to the Council on 20 February (see S/PV.2114) seeks to meet the urgent priorities while we prepare the ground for a future peacekeeping operation.

(*spoke in English*)

The crisis in the Central African Republic began long before the unconstitutional change of Government

in March 2013. It is rooted in the long-standing socioeconomic, political, structural and governance deficiencies, fragile social cohesion and deep-seated feelings of marginalization among some communities, in particular the populations in the northern part of the country, which have felt discriminated against by the central Government. Those conditions were exacerbated by corruption, nepotism, abuse of power, internal strife and the deteriorating capacity of the national army. The State has virtually no capacity to manage the massive array of threats that it is facing. There is no national army and the remnants of the police and gendarmerie lack the basic equipment and the means to exercise their duties. Meanwhile, the State administration is now largely absent throughout the country, with the international community substituting, or trying to substitute, for the State in delivering basic services where possible.

The challenges that confront the Central African Republic run deep and are not susceptible to any easy solution. In spite of the progressive effectiveness of MISCA and Operation Sangaris, the current deployment of international security forces is not sufficient. It lacks the civilian component to adequately protect civilians under imminent threat and to tackle the root causes of the conflict.

Addressing the crisis in the Central African Republic requires a unified and integrated approach through the deployment of a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, the utmost priority of which will be the protection of civilians. Of course, we are fully aware that it will be a particularly challenging environment for a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Yet, we believe that the United Nations is uniquely positioned to deploy and to sustain a multidimensional peacekeeping operation with the full range of capacities that are required to address the deep-rooted nature of the complex crisis unfolding in the Central African Republic.

The Secretary-General's proposal envisages the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation that would aim at re-hatting as many MISCA troops as possible. A strong MISCA will not only help to address the immediate security challenges faced by the population but also will be essential to facilitate the transition to a United Nations peacekeeping operation. MISCA still lacks the critical capabilities to achieve its full potential. Let me therefore join the Secretary-General in calling on bilateral partners and Members States to provide urgently to MISCA rapid and generous financial and material support, including for the payment of its personnel and for the reimbursement of major military equipment.

The Secretary-General's proposal is based on a fit-for-purpose approach that takes into account the specificities of the context in the Central African Republic. We are committed to being flexible and to adopting a phased approach. We will review our objectives and priorities on a regular basis and will adjust our configuration and activities over time to the particular conditions and needs of the country and its people. In the early phase of its deployment, the objectives of the United Nations peacekeeping operation will focus on providing a secure environment. That, of course, a sine qua non for progress in other areas. It will support the transitional Government in its exercise of basic State functions, as well as peace and mediation efforts, the extension of the authority of the State, the protection of basic human rights and the facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

That will require an initial surge of military personnel and the corresponding military enablers. Alongside the initial military surge, essential civilian capacities will be deployed, phased in gradually as the situation stabilizes and the necessary living and working facilities are developed and more work can be undertaken on civilian tasks. Police will also be phased in and, as the security environment improves, they should eventually replace the bulk of the initial military surge capacity. While a large, initial military deployment will be necessary to address the security challenges, it is envisaged that United Nations military forces would draw down progressively as quickly as conditions will allow, allowing the United Nations to focus as much of its efforts as possible on critical civilian, State-building tasks.

Although the peacekeeping mission would be tailored to the circumstances on the ground with a military footprint expected to decrease once the situation permits, let us be clear — there will be no quick fix in the Central African Republic. Responding to the crisis will require time; it will require resources. The scale of the needs in the Central African Republic is daunting, and progress in any one area will not be sustainable without significant and simultaneous engagement in others. Therefore, the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation should be part of a broader, long-term engagement of the international

community. Success in that broader effort to help the Government and people of the Central African Republic rebuild a State will depend on the contributions and commitments of many actors, most importantly the Central Africans themselves.

(*spoke in French*)

We are greatly encouraged by the determination that the new transitional Government has shown in addressing the immediate challenges while the preparations for lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic are being made. The unwavering commitment of the Central Africans themselves, as well as the continued commitment of neighbouring countries, the Economic Community of Central African States, the region, the African Union and the international community will be essential to finding a solution to this grave crisis.

As the Council knows, this is not the first Mission of the United Nations in the Central African Republic. Similar concerns were raised by Security Council members when the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) was deployed in 1998, in particular with regard to its financial implications. However, MINURCA was withdrawn in early 2000 because it could not address the root causes of the crisis and or create the conditions for a lasting peace. It is therefore essential that our commitment this time be strong and proportional to the complexity of the situation in order to put a definitive end to the vicious cycle of instability into which the Central African Republic regularly falls.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that the establishment of a multidimensional peacekeeping operation will generate substantial costs. However, in the same breath I will say that delaying a sustained response would be even more costly. The potential negative impact for stability in the region and beyond, including the risk of the country being split and creating a breeding ground for extremist groups, should not be ignored. We have a window of opportunity now to take action and build the foundations for a lasting peace in the Central African Republic. We must, therefore, assume our responsibilities and work together to achieve that common goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Amos.

Ms. Amos: I thank you very much, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Central African Republic following my recent visit with the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Mr. Michel Sidibé; Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Ms. Mbaranga Gasarabwe; and the African Union Political Affairs Commissioner, Ms. Aisha Abdullahi.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains extremely grave and urgent action by all, including by the Council, is required to prevent further bloodshed. The violence has led to the total breakdown of the State locally and nationally. State institutions, which were weak, have now totally collapsed in Bangui and across the country. The State cannot deliver basic services and the salaries of civil society servants have not been paid for months. There is no national army, and the police and the gendarmerie are ill-equipped to address the challenges the country is facing. Mr. Ladsous referred to that.

Mr. Guterres will speak to the regional implications of the crisis, which are now profound. The Central African Republic is experiencing unacceptable sectarian brutality, persistent insecurity and fear with tragic humanitarian consequences.

More than 650,000 people are still internally displaced across the country, with more than 232,000 in Bangui alone. There are 70,000 people still living at the airport site for internally displaced persons (IDPs), in appalling conditions that are set to deteriorate dramatically with the onset of the rainy season. More than 288,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries and thousands more are desperately trying to leave, seeing it as their last and only option. Humanitarian workers are now facing the difficult dilemma of either responding positively to their requests to leave and thereby appearing to contribute to changing the demography of communities, or of not facilitating their exit and leaving them at risk of being killed.

Unless the current trajectory is urgently reversed, the demographic and social changes taking place in the Central African Republic will have severe and lasting consequences for the country, the region and the continent. Trust between communities that have lived side by side for years has eroded. While people — at all levels — told us that the conflict is not about religion, but about the pursuit of power and economic advantage, it is being played out through religious and ethnic

conflict. Communities and people's fear is being exploited for political gain.

Today, those seeking personal gain at the expense of the people are gaining ground. We are witnessing armed groups attacking communities, the exploitation and manipulation of widespread fear and, increasingly, retaliatory attacks by and against ordinary people. The longer that goes on the more difficult it will be for the Central African Republic to recover.

Humanitarian assistance alone cannot resolve the situation in the Central African Republic. Security and stability must be urgently restored, and while the forces of France and the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic have provided security and saved lives where and when they have been deployed, they do not have the substantial resources required to provide security throughout the country. More troops are desperately needed and they are needed now. The Central Africans need to feel safe in their own country. It is the first vital step for recovery.

As we speak, people are living in fear of being attacked and the international community appears paralysed. Attempts to establish areas of temporary protection for people under threat in their neighbourhoods and to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs have not yet achieved the desired results due to the inability to provide the necessary security. For example, one site, called PK5, where we have tried to establish a safe environment, was attacked a few days before our visit.

Improved security will also allow humanitarian workers to save more lives and make a real difference through their relief operations. The international humanitarian community, given the scale of the crisis in Bangui, declared it one of our highest priority crises, and at a meeting yesterday we reconfirmed our commitment to doing all we can to secure additional capacity and resources to support the people of the Central African Republic.

But to do that security must be improved. For example, the insecurity on the road from Douala to Bangui, which is central to commercial activity in the country and for humanitarian supply, prevents the regular transportation of goods and relief items into the country by road. The alternative — airlifting of relief goods — forces us to divert our already limited resources from feeding and supporting people to paying for the transport of their food. Almost eight times more expensive than moving goods by road, air transport from Douala is unsustainable in the longer term. As the Secretary-General outlines in his report to the Security Council (S/2014/142), a comprehensive and multidimensional response is required to meet the vast needs of a country that has been ignored for years.

The restoration of services is also urgently needed, and all efforts to support the authorities in that endeavour must be made. While in Bangui, we spoke with the Head of State of the Transition, Ms. Samba-Panza. She has a difficult and challenging task and needs to demonstrate as soon as possible the benefits of political transition. She told us that people point to their stomachs when they see her and that if she is not able to give people the means to feed themselves soon she will lose their trust. She outlined her priorities as security, institution-building, the restoration of basic services, justice, the rule of law and reconciliation. She made it clear that she required the support of the whole international community to make progress in all those areas.

As further evidence that the conflict is not simply about religion, religious and community leaders have come together and shown great courage and leadership as they stand up to extremist elements. We were impressed by their tireless work and resolve to intervene to try to stop the violence and promote reconciliation. Again, we must do everything we can to support their mediation and reconciliation efforts at the national and local levels and demonstrate that, despite the horrors of the conflict, communities can still live together.

One of the recommendations from our visit is a proposal for a coordinated operational focus on four geographic areas — Bossangoa, Bria, N'Dele and Bambari — where both communities are still living together and where a combination of international, national and local efforts can make an immediate difference. We want to see the international community's resources targeted to stabilizing the security situation in those areas, restoring State authority and the rule of law, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance and basic services and promoting reconciliation efforts. It is important to demonstrate that communities can continue to live side by side in peace and stability.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his six-point proposal, the humanitarian response in the Central African Republic is severely underfunded, further limiting our reach to people in need — and time

is not our side. A food crisis is looming, and with the rainy season upon us, millions of people could be at risk of communicable diseases. The movement for Central Africans, troops and humanitarian workers within the country will be severely restricted as the already poorly maintained roads become impossible to use. While increased logistics capacity will be required once the rains set in, financial support is urgently needed now to provide seeds and tools so that people can plant, to support the pre-positioning of stocks and voluntary returns where possible and to improve conditions in sites where internally displaced persons are located.

The humanitarian strategic response plan for 2014 requests $551 million for humanitarian interventions in the Central African Republic, which is modest given the scale of the need, but it is only funded at 16 per cent. Many pledges made at the January Brussels conference, which I co-chaired with European Union Commissioner Georgieva, have yet to translate into funds. I ask Member States and international organizations that made pledges to honour them as soon as possible. As the United Nations and operational partners extend humanitarian operations outside Bangui, continued financial support by the international community is crucial to support our efforts.

The humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic is dire, and more must be done to ensure that the work of the Transition Government, humanitarian workers, Operation Sangaris and MISCA troops is sustained. We must provide the people of the Central African Republic with the security that they need and the services and assistance they require so that peace and reconciliation efforts have some chance of success.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres: I do not remember any field visit in my eight-year tenure as High Commissioner that caused me such anguish as my recent trip to the Central African Republic. I was deeply shocked by the brutality and inhumanity that have characterized the violence happening in the country and its consequences on the suffering of the people. The evolution of the Central African refugee situation in the region clearly illustrates that while it is clearly not a new crisis — the country has been in some sort of trouble since the beginning — its current phase is in no way more of the same.

By the end of 2012 there were already 165,000 refugees registered in the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo. That number has by now grown to more than 290,000. Some 65,000 refugees fled last year, largely in the aftermath of the Séléka coup. Another 60,000 have sought refuge abroad since December 2013, when the violence grew to a horrific scale, including with the emergence of the anti-Balaka militias. In addition, more than 80,000 foreign nationals have left the country, many with the help of their own States and the International Organization for Migration.

Cameroon hosts the largest Central African refugee population, with more than 34,000 new arrivals since December and some 130,000 in total. The situation is dramatic, with refugees arriving scared, malnourished and extremely vulnerable after having walked and hidden in the forests for days and weeks. Many convoys to the border are attacked, and international forces are too thinly spread to be able to provide effective protection.

Once refugees cross the border, living conditions are extremely difficult. Local communities in all neighbouring countries have responded with enormous generosity, with faith leaders mobilizing the donations from the local population and some families hosting up to 100 refugees in their compounds. In some locations, like Kentzou in eastern Cameroon, the number of refugees and repatriated nationals of other countries hosted there now exceeds the local population, creating enormous pressure on scarce resources and infrastructure in what is a remote area of the country. Humanitarian actors are scrambling to relocate refugees from scattered and difficult to reach locations along the border to sites with better assistance possibilities before they become cut off with the beginning of the rainy season.

But we are far from being able to deliver what is needed, given the very precarious situation of the people we care for. The resources we have are entirely insufficient compared with the rapidly growing challenges we face. In Cameroon, as in other neighbouring countries, robust international financial support is required to respond to the enormous needs of the new arrivals and support those communities that have so generously taken them in. I can say without exaggeration that we are dramatically underfunded and have only been able to respond by using our own limited resources.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is also working within the interagency response inside the Central African Republic, leading the protection cluster and coordinating camp management and shelter programmes for the internally displaced. But those are areas about which we have always been thoroughly briefed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

In addition, we are concerned for the safety of the more than 17,000 refugees from other countries still in the Central African Republic, 70 per cent of whom are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have been supporting the repatriation of those who wish to return from Bangui and Batalimo and are assisting others in Bambari and Zemio, where they are not immediately under threat.

Allow me to convey some of my impressions from my recent visit to the Central African Republic, although they go beyond the scope of my immediate responsibilities as High Commissioner, because they clearly show, from a humanitarian perspective, the importance of approving the Secretary-General's proposals.

Since its independence, the country has witnessed a succession of coups d'état, with only one democratic transition — in the 1990s. The State had already been progressively disappearing long before events took a new dramatic turn with the emergence of the Séléka in late 2012. However, this new phase of the conflict differs starkly from the earlier crises, largely due to the way it is tearing apart the social fabric of the country.

Until last year, the Central African Republic was largely a stranger to religious conflict, which is why it would be wrong to analyse current events that way. While religiously motivated conflicts usually start out as faith being instrumentalized for political purposes, the real danger is that religious tensions then gain a dynamic of their own — a demon that, once unleashed, becomes exceedingly difficult to stop and threatens to completely destroy society.

That is what could happen in the Central African Republic. The Séléka alliance was formed from Central African rebel groups and various foreign elements and was indeed predominantly Muslim, although its political agenda had nothing to do with aspirations to create an Islamic State. The interreligious and intercommunal dimension of the conflict emerged after the looting and atrocities against civilians committed by Séléka and ex-Séléka members, which were at the origin of the first refugee outflow of last year and which in turn led to the emergence of the anti-Balaka militias.

In the beginning, the international community and actors on the ground were slow to understand that the process of disarming the Séléka changed the balance of forces on the ground and that the anti-Balaka was quickly growing into a new monster, with a different nature from the initial, more or less spontaneous self-defence groups. Although it is mainly made up of frustrated youth, criminal elements, ex-soldiers and militias supporting the former President, and although its main motivations have become revenge and looting, it was quickly mislabelled as Christian, which fuelled the interreligious dimension of the violence.

Since early December, we have effectively witnessed a cleansing of the majority of the Muslim population in the western part of the Central African Republic. Tens of thousands of them have left the country, the second refugee outflow of the current crisis I mentioned, and most of those remaining are under permanent threat.

Just last week, there were approximately 15,000 people trapped in 18 locations in the western part of the Central African Republic, surrounded by anti-Balaka elements and at very high risk of attack. International forces are present in some of those sites, but if more security is not made available immediately, many of those civilians could be killed right before our eyes.

There is a glimmer of hope in the fact that, in a few places, communities and courageous religious leaders are starting to take mediation into their own hands. The strengthening of the civilian capacity of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic to support mediation efforts— which was mentioned, with the Secretary-General insisting on its importance — is an urgent and decisive need. The demon of religious cleansing must be stopped and must be stopped now.

To do that the most important protection and humanitarian objective inside the Central African Republic is the re-establishment of security and law and order. That is a key focus of the Secretary-General's six-point initiative. The immediate reinforcement of international forces, in particular with police contingents to ensure security in the neighbourhoods, is the biggest imperative. Another is immediate financial support to the Government, to re-establish its capacity to function and put in place at least a basic police and

justice system, able to arrest, try and jail criminals. I must say I was very impressed by the new President, but the thing that made more of an impression on me was when she confessed that she did not have a cent. Long after she was elected, she was still not able to pay any of the salaries in arrears. She has appealed for the option to pay two months of the many that are due, and as of now, she has not been given those resources, which are absolutely essential to establishing her credibility and to enabling her to put in place the minimal requirements of a functioning State.

The current events in the Central African Republic could also potentially destabilize the whole region. Continued brutality against Muslim communities could create a pretext for extremist terrorist forces, which are already present in other parts of the continent, to spread to its centre.

While the violence has been concentrated in the west, we must also not forget the long-neglected east. I was there four years ago when the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic ended its mission, and we had a camp of 5,000 refugees from the Sudan. There was no presence of the State in that region and no security at all, and we had to remove the refugees from the north-eastern part of the country to the centre, close to Bambari, as an absolute requirement for protecting them, because it was impossible to do so in that part of the country. There, in the north-eastern part of the country, the current leadership could easily be challenged, explaining some of the concerns that have been expressed over a possible fragmentation of the country, which can and must be avoided. National and international efforts to respond to the current crisis therefore need to take into account all of the Central African Republic. They must also acknowledge that the reconstruction of a disappeared State is, as has been stated, an intensive and time-consuming process, which must go far beyond calm being restored and elections taking place.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Toussaint Kongo Doudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad.

Mr. Kongo Doudou (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, I would like to express our gratitude for the commitment and enthusiasm of the international community, and in particular the Security Council's determination in undertaking a host of initiatives aimed at finding a solution to the Central African crisis. We have listened to the other speakers today, most of whom are from the United Nations, including Ms. Valerie Amos, who we met in Bangui; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, who presented the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/142); and Mr. Guterres, who gave a very detailed briefing and who was also in Bangui and witnessed the situation firsthand.

I will not speak at length. I simply wanted to say that the work that has been carried out by all those high-level United Nations officials and their colleagues, including the Secretary-General's report on the Central African Republic just presented, has been earnest, balanced and well-documented. I will therefore not add anything on that subject.

I would ask the President of the Council and Under-Secretary-General Ladsous to convey to the Secretary-General our gratitude for his efficient work, which was accomplished within a time frame that took into account the urgency of the situation facing us. We welcome the fact that the report takes into account the various concerns and situations of the national and international actors involved in resolving the crisis in my country. I also commend the African Union, which was closely involved in the preparation of the report. On behalf of the Government of the Central African Republic, I can guarantee the Council all the necessary political support and our full cooperation for the implementation of the various recommendations.

We support and endorse the accounts presented by the senior officials of the United Nations, and we appeal to the members of the Security Council to accept them as an accurate portrait of the situation on the ground.

In the light of the numerous challenges we face — be they security, humanitarian, political, economic and social, including the need for national dialogue and to restore State authority throughout the entirety of the national territory — we are convinced that the United Nations alone, through a peacekeeping operation that must be multidimensional, multifunctional and, I hope, integrated, can bring to bear the comparative advantage we need.

In that context, we commend the outstanding work of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) in securing Bangui

and other parts of the country. That Mission must serve as a model for the new peacekeeping mission. While we await the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers, who would be most welcome — even if they came tomorrow, we would roll out the red carpet — and in the light of the procedural lead-time of approximately six months, it would be most desirable to see the operational capacity of MISCA increased, in keeping with the Secretary-General's call for the sending of approximately 3,000 additional personnel.

I appeal to the wisdom of the members of the Security Council to endorse the report submitted by the Secretary-General before them. I very much hope that their deliberations will lead to the swift adoption of a strong resolution authorizing the deployment of a peacekeeping operation, in close coordination and cooperation with the African Union.

We must act now to prevent the Central African Republic spiralling further into chaos and becoming the breeding ground for international terrorism. Boko Haram are not far away — less than 4,000 kilometres from Bangui. We have seen Janjaweed elements among the ex-Séléka forces. We have received threats on the Internet, as everyone will be aware — threats that we must take seriously — from Al-Qaida and, in particular, from Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. Those are serious threats. If we do not tackle that problem and try instead to push back the critical and crucial decision before the Security Council — the decision to swiftly establish a peacekeeping operation — then the Central African Republic will be lost because terrorism, whether we like it or not, is steps ahead of us, we who are fighting for peace.

One again, I appeal to the wisdom of the members of the Security Council. We are losing a great number of human lives every day. The hospitals are overflowing. The situation we face, as described by Ms. Amos, Mr. Ladsous and Mr. Guterres, is a reality.

Let us not allow for a great many more lives to be lost to delays. Taking a decision now would allow for a mission to be deployed in the coming six months. But if we wait another six months to take the decision, the mission would be deployed in approximately 12 months. That would be time wasted that could be used instead to protect human lives.

Let us not allow the threat of a humanitarian crisis to become reality, even if it is already all-too-real. All of those who have come to Bangui have seen upon landing at the airport that it has become an enormous camp for displaced persons, where more than 100,000 of our countrymen and countrywomen are living in deplorable and atrocious conditions.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo, the Mediator of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and President Idriss Deby Itno, ECCAS Chair-in-Office, for the role they have played and their continuing efforts with a view to restoring peace in the Central African Republic.

I would also like to thank the African Union for its commitment and leadership in promoting peace in Central Africa. In that regard, I express my wish that political leaders heed our hope that a peacekeeping operation be established. There are no alternatives for survival. We also express the wish that the political leadership and military command of that future peacekeeping operation be in the hands of Africans, in close cooperation with the African Union.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to underscore my gratitude to all of our bilateral and multilateral partners who continue to provide many types of support actions towards resolving the crisis, especially to France, which swiftly deployed its forces in Operation Sangaris; the United States of America, which provided logistical support for the deployment of MISCA components; and the European Union, the World Bank and the non-governmental organizations that are working tirelessly on the ground.

(*spoke in English*)

Please, we need the Council's help. If we delay it, it will be too late. We may lose the country. There may be partition. The north will become a safe haven for extremists. Boko Haram is not far. We have already received threats. Do not let us have to leave our country. Please, be with us and think about the children — the girls that are being raped. People are being killed. There is just too much emotion. I am sorry.

The President (*spoke in French*): Please be assured of international solidarity and that your message, Sir, has been heard. I wish you great determination and courage.

I now give the floor to Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

Mr. António (African Union) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate Luxembourg on

assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank you, Sir, for having invited me to address today's Security Council meeting, on behalf of the African Union, on the important matter of the situation in the Central African Republic. Calendar constraints have prevented the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Ismaïl Chergui, from attending as he would have wished to, given the importance and high priority of the subject matter for the African Union.

I would also like to thank Mr. Ladsous for introducing the Secretary-General's very comprehensive report (S/2014/142). I thank Ms. Valerie Amos for her personal commitment, including the visit she paid to the Central African Republic together with the Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union. I should also like to thank Mr. Antonio Guterres for the very complete picture he painted of the situation on the ground.

This meeting is further testimony to the commitment of the Security Council and its members to effectively contributing to international efforts aimed at addressing the serious crisis affecting the Central African Republic. More importantly, the AU's participation bears further testimony to the ongoing efforts to strengthen relations between the United Nations and subregional organizations. We are confident that, through our combined efforts, the Central African Republic authorities and other stakeholders will be able to overcome the many and daunting challenges facing their country.

Today's meeting is devoted to the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 48 of resolution 2127 (2013). The report (S/2014/142) builds on the assessment mission undertaken by the United Nations to the Central African Republic in the course of February. The African Union participated in the assessment mission and subsequently had a number of exchanges with the Secretariat to convey its views and facilitate a coordinated and effective way forward, as underlined by Mr. Ladsous. We commend the Secretary-General for his continued commitment and efforts. We reiterate our determination to continue working with the Secretariat in furtherance of our common objective of assisting the Central African Republic to restore lasting peace, security and stability.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Security Council that, since the Council's meeting held on 20 February (see S/PV.7114), the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA), with the support of Operation Sangaris, has continued to make sustained efforts towards the implementation of its mandate. Further progress has been made in the stabilization of the situation. There is no doubt that things have improved for the better. The number of security incidents has significantly fallen, and many human lives have been saved. Internally displaced persons are increasingly returning to their original homes. In Bangui, life is gradually returning to normalcy.

Furthermore, MISCA has been able to secure the corridor linking Bangui to the border with Cameroon, which is vital to both the provision humanitarian assistance and trade flow. It is providing protection to the transitional authorities, securing key infrastructure and assisting humanitarian organizations in a variety of ways. Steps have also been taken to disarm armed elements of the ex-Séléka, the anti-Balaka and other groups, and to support national efforts towards disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform.

In the report the Commission submitted to the Security Council pursuant to paragraph 32 of resolution 2127 (2013), more detailed information is provided on the implementation of MISCA's mandate, the progress made to date with the support of Operation Sangaris, and the challenges ahead.

As stressed by Commissioner Chergui when he addressed this body a few weeks ago (see S/PV.7114), many challenges remain ahead. The level of violence, as underlined by those who have spoken before me today, remains unacceptable and sustained action is required to ensure more effective protection for the civilian population. The AU, through MISCA, will not relent in its efforts and is determined to take all measures required within the context of its mandate to facilitate the attainment of the set objectives.

As we meet here today, and while fully cognizant of the many problems we need to address on the ground, it is critical that we acknowledge the progress achieved and the significant difference made on the ground by MISCA, with the support of Operation Sangaris. These results demonstrate the clear value added and distinct contribution of African-led peace support operations as they are deployed in unstable areas to create conditions conducive to the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We note with satisfaction the acknowledgement in the Secretary-General's report of

the work accomplished by MISCA and the sacrifices made.

I would like, at this juncture, to reiterate the AU's appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment and to pay tribute to the soldiers who have fallen in the line of duty, as well as to the dozens of others who have been wounded. It is only fitting for the AU to use this forum to express, once again, its utmost gratitude to all partners that are providing support to MISCA, including the European Union, whose financial support has been so critical, and its member States, the United States and other bilateral partners, as well as to the Secretariat for offering expertise to the Mission.

As we address the issue of the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, I would like to indicate that the AU has always been in favour of the deployment of such an operation once the required conditions are created. This was emphasized in the letter that the Chairperson of the Commission, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, addressed on 17 February to the Secretary-General. Accordingly, the Commission welcomes the recommendation for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, with a possible transfer of authority by 15 September, in the understanding that this date has to be confirmed following a further joint AU-United Nations assessment.

The complexity of the situation in the Central African Republic and the daunting nature of the challenges to be overcome are acknowledged by all. There is therefore a need to ensure that the transformation of MISCA into a United Nations operation is informed by sound principles. Let me briefly articulate them, building on in Chairperson Dlamini-Zuma's letter of 17 February.

First, while the international community will continue to play an important role in the long-term stabilization of the Central African Republic, including through a United Nations peacekeeping operation, it is clear that without national ownership no amount of international support can bring about lasting solutions to the challenges facing the country. In this regard, we note the emphasis placed by the United Nations report on the need for political commitment on the part of national stakeholders. The role of the international community should be not to substitute the Central African Republic stakeholders and people, but rather to complement and accompany their efforts, in full respect of the country's sovereignty.

Secondly, there is need to acknowledge and strongly support the role of the region and the AU in the post-MISCA phase so that the envisaged United Nations peacekeeping operation and other related efforts can be anchored in a strong regional and continental involvement. The region, working closely with the AU, has demonstrated strong leadership in addressing the crisis in the Central African Republic. Its continued involvement, with the support of the AU, will be crucial to the success of the envisaged United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Therefore, it is important that the Security Council continue to support the leading role of the region through the efforts of the Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Chair of the ECCAS Follow up Committee on the Central African Republic, as well as the role of the AU, including through the International Contact Group on the situation in Central African Republic. In this respect, the Commission notes the relevant paragraph of the Secretary-General's report. The AU, in collaboration with ECCAS, will consult further with the United Nations on the implementation modalities of such support and how best to ensure close coordination between the United Nations and AU efforts.

Thirdly, any United Nations peacekeeping operation should be part of a broader and more sustainable international engagement in favour of the Central African Republic. As rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, the challenges facing the Central African Republic are complex and multifaceted. Addressing them effectively requires a holistic approach and the involvement of a variety of international actors on the basis of their respective comparative advantages.

(*spoke in French*)

Perhaps this is an opportune moment to reiterate that the African Union will welcome all the support that bilateral and multilateral partners provide to the transitional authorities of the Central African Republic.

(*spoke in English*)

Fourthly, the successful implementation of the MISCA mandate is critical for the success of the envisaged United Nations operation. In that respect, every effort should be made to provide MISCA with the much-needed logistical and financial support to enable it complete the initial stabilization phase of the situation within the envisaged time frame. While noting

the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, and in light of earlier experiences, the Commission calls for a full-fledged United Nations support package funded through assessed contributions and provided to all MISCA contingents, as they all contribute to the successful conduct of the mission's operations.

Fifthly, we need to learn from the experience of the transition from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, as rightly acknowledged in the report of the Secretary-General. That requires close consultation between the AU Commission and the Secretariat, in a spirit of transparency and partnership, including jointly defining the terms of reference of the planned transition team, generating forces and agreeing on the modalities for the re-hatting of the contingents currently serving under MISCA.

It also requires that the AU be adequately consulted from the outset on the draft resolution that would mandate the deployment of the envisaged United Nations peacekeeping operation. Without compromising the time lines envisaged for the deployment of the United Nations operation, it is important that adequate time be given for the consultation process to be carried out to the satisfaction of all stakeholders concerned.

Learning from the Mali experience, and without prejudice to the relevant United Nations rules, it would be important to ensure that the African stakeholders, including the region, are adequately consulted on the appointment of the leadership of the envisaged United Nations peacekeeping operation. In that respect, the Commission recommends the appointment of Africans to lead the mission and its military and police components.

The deployment of a United Nations operation in the Central African Republic should mark a new step towards broader and more sustained international engagement in the country, anchored on the principle of national ownership and strong regional and continental involvement.

Since the deployment of MISCA, less than three months ago, the region and the AU, building on earlier efforts by ECCAS, have relentlessly endeavoured to assist the Central African Republic in overcoming the many challenges confronting it. In so doing, Africa has acted on the basis of the principle of solidarity. Africa will not relent in its commitment to assist the Central African Republic and its people in their hour of need. No stone will be left unturned to ensure that the mandate of MISCA is effectively implemented.

In conclusion, I would like to re-echo the African Union's earlier calls on the need for the international community to mobilize adequate support to meet the humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic. Timely and increased humanitarian support will go a long way in alleviating the plight of the affected populations and in enhancing the credibility of our collective efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. António for his briefing.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.